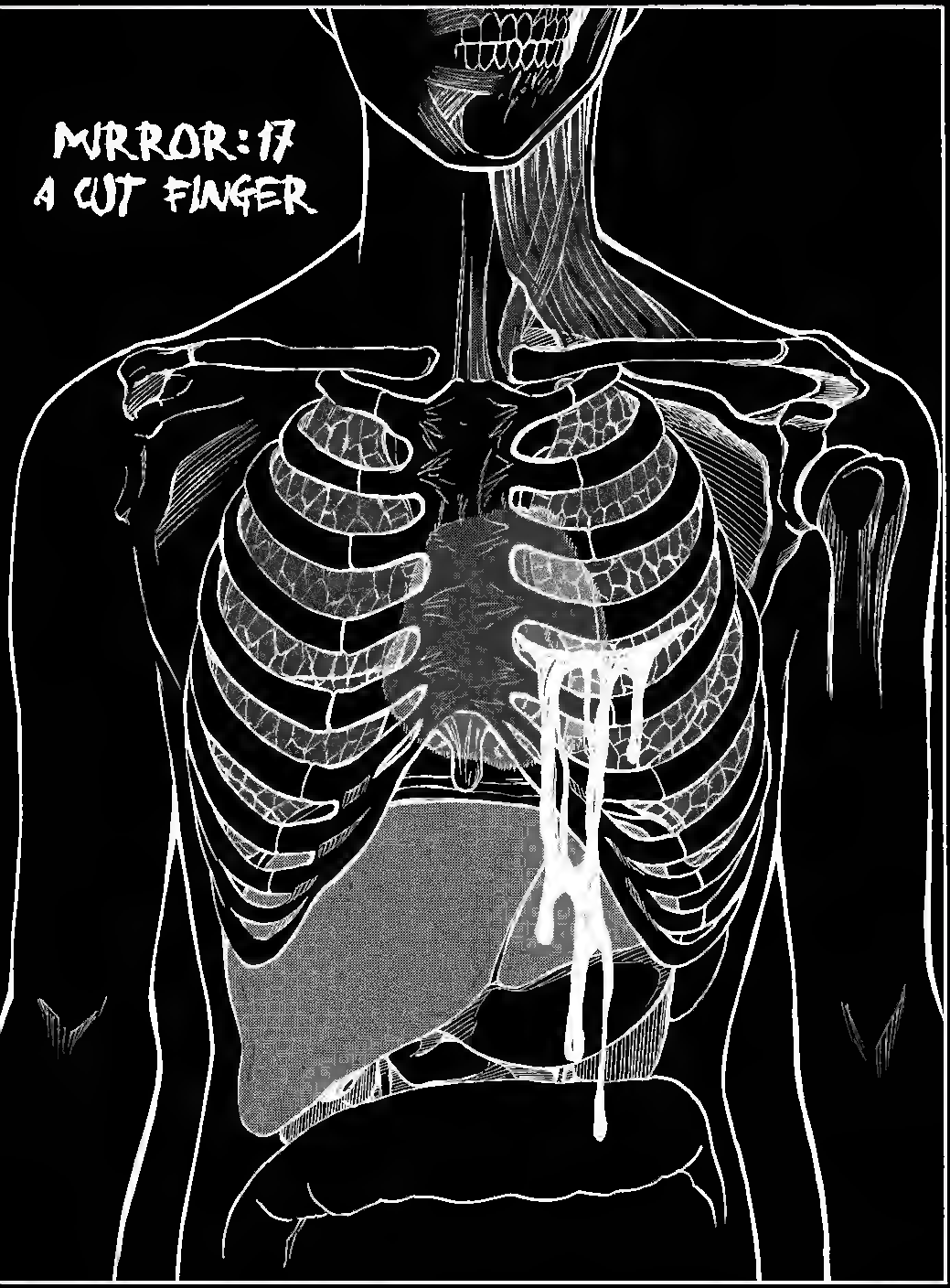
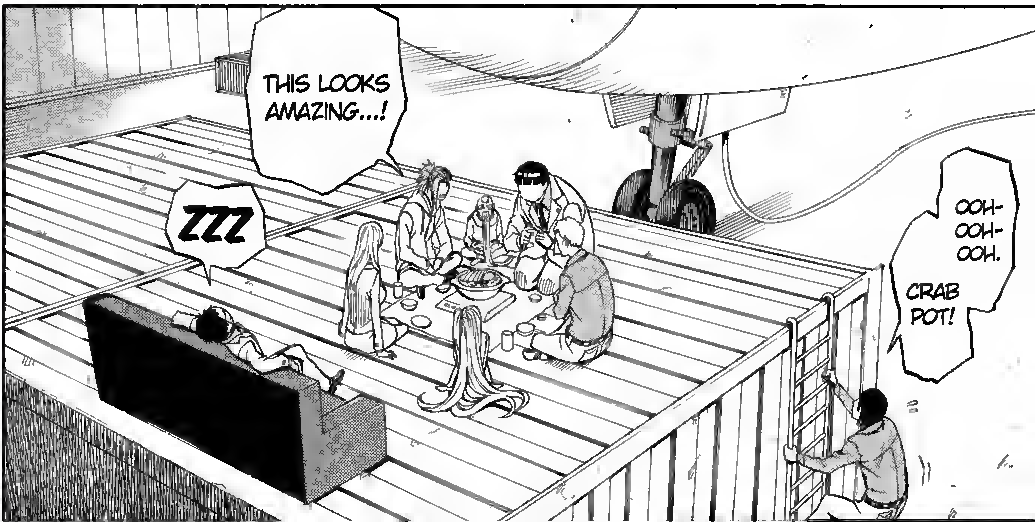
SUKEDACHI NINE
助太刀09


MIRROR: 17
A CUT FINGER

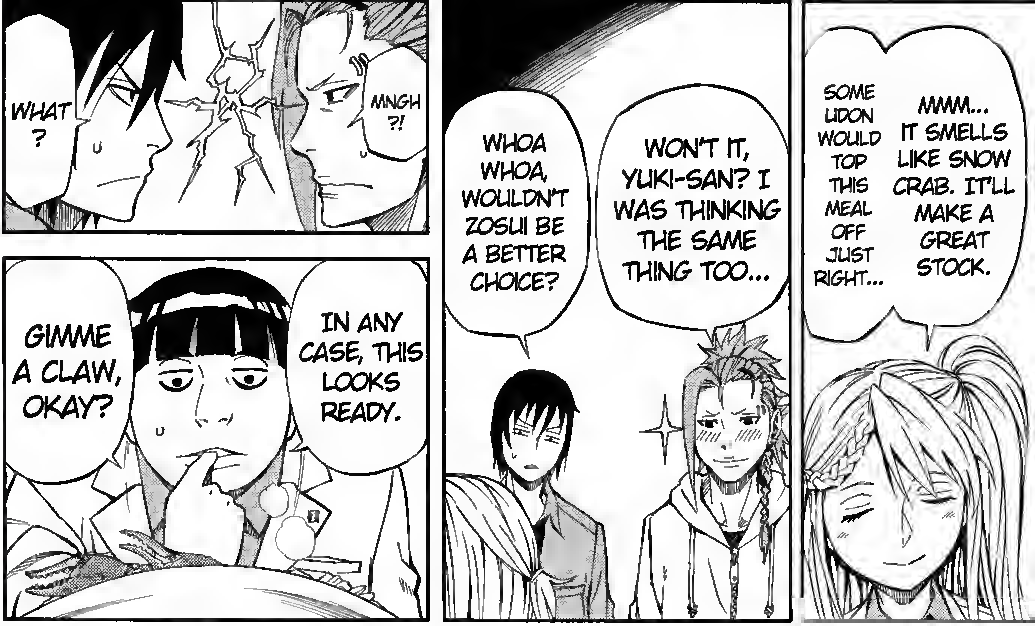
I DON'T KNOW WHO YOU ARE...
...BUT YOU SAVED MY LIFE! HONEST TO GOD!
GOD... DAMMIT...
THEY HAD KNIVES ON THEM, SO...
IT'S SELF-DEFENSE! IT HAS TO BE!
I'LL VOUCH FOR YOU, SO--
HE KILLED...
...THESE YOUTHS?!
BUT...

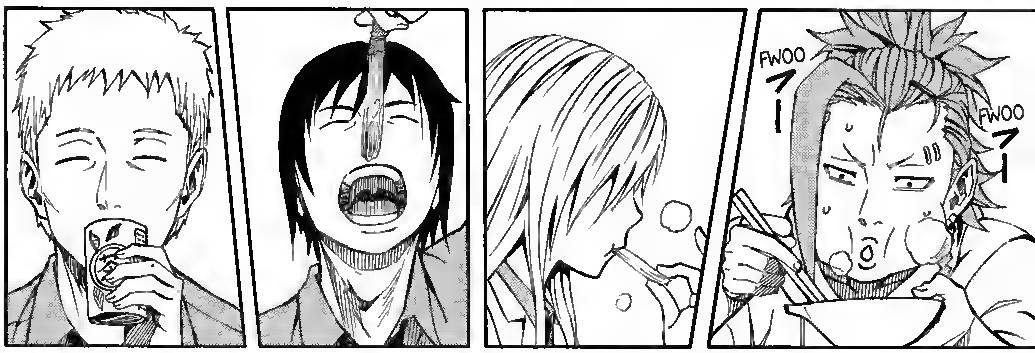
SHTHOK
EH?
THIS ISN'T ENOUGH...
WHY ...?!
NOT NEARLY ENOUGH...

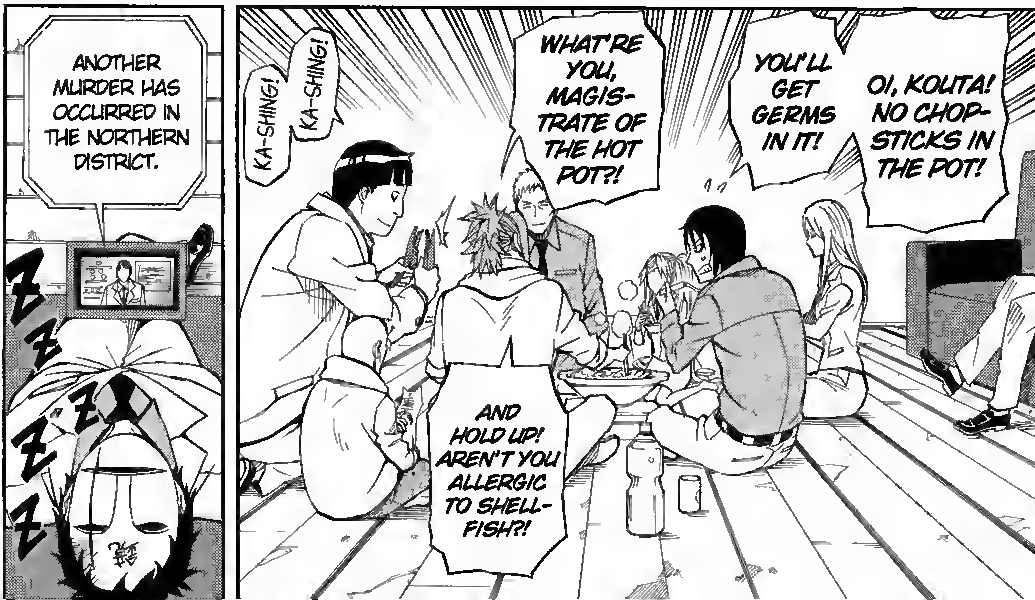
HIIY
CLUB
CLUB
HIIY
CLUB

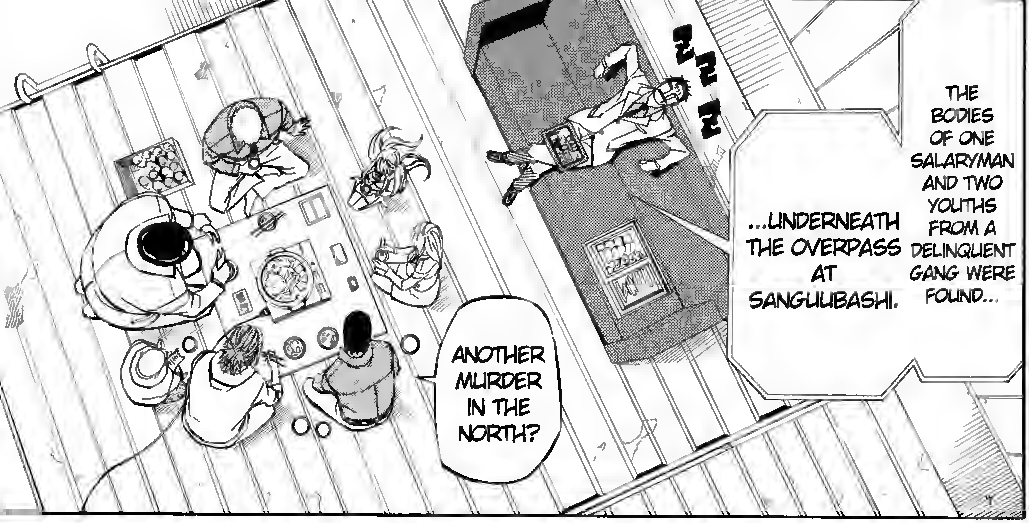

THIS LOOKS AMAZING...!
ZZZ
OOH-OOH-OOH.
CRAB POT!

WE NEVER GOT TO THROW A WELCOMING PARTY FOR YOU RECRUITS, SO THIS IS THE LEAST I COULD DO.
I HAPPENED TO PICK IT UP DURING MY TRIP TO THE HARBOR LAST WEEK.
THANK YOU FOR TREATING US TO THIS AMAZING CRAB POT, SAKURADA-SAN.
IT'S NOTHING.
I'M SO TOUCHED... THAT YOU'D DO THIS FOR US...
SNIFF ...!
THE OTHER SENPAI OF OURS CAN'T EVEN COMPARE.
WE'LL GLADLY PARTAKE.
...SO WE KNOW IT'LL TASTE GOOD.
THE THING HAD THE GUMPTION TO HOLD MY FINGER HOSTAGE...
カニカニ
CRAB POT?!
WHADDYA MEAN, THE OTHER SENPAI?
IF I WEREN'T ALLERGIC TO SHELLFISH...
...I'D TREAT YOU TO SOME CRAB TOO...
YOU'RE DROOL-ING...

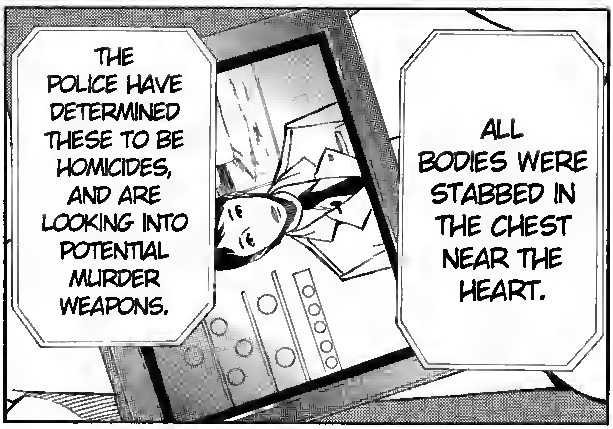

WHAT?
MNGH?!
GIMME A CLAW, OKAY?
IN ANY CASE, THIS LOOKS READY.
WHOA WHOA, WOULDN'T ZOSUI BE A BETTER CHOICE?
WON'T IT, YUKI-SAN? I WAS THINKING THE SAME THING TOO...
SOME UDON WOULD TOP THIS MEAL OFF JUST RIGHT...
MMM... IT SMELLS LIKE SNOW CRAB. IT'LL MAKE A GREAT STOCK.


FWOO
FWOO


ANOTHER MURDER HAS OCCURRED IN THE NORTHERN DISTRICT.
ZZZZZZ
KA-SHING!
KA-SHING!
WHAT'RE YOU, MAGIS-TRATE OF THE HOT POT?!
YOU'LL GET GERMS IN IT!
OI, KOUTA! NO CHOP-STICKS IN THE POT!
AND HOLD UP! AREN'T YOU ALLERGIC TO SHELL-FISH?!


THE BODIES OF ONE SALARYMAN AND TWO YOUTHS FROM A DELINQUENT GANG WERE FOUND...
...UNDERNEATH THE OVERPASS AT SANGUUBASHI.
ANOTHER MURDER IN THE NORTH?

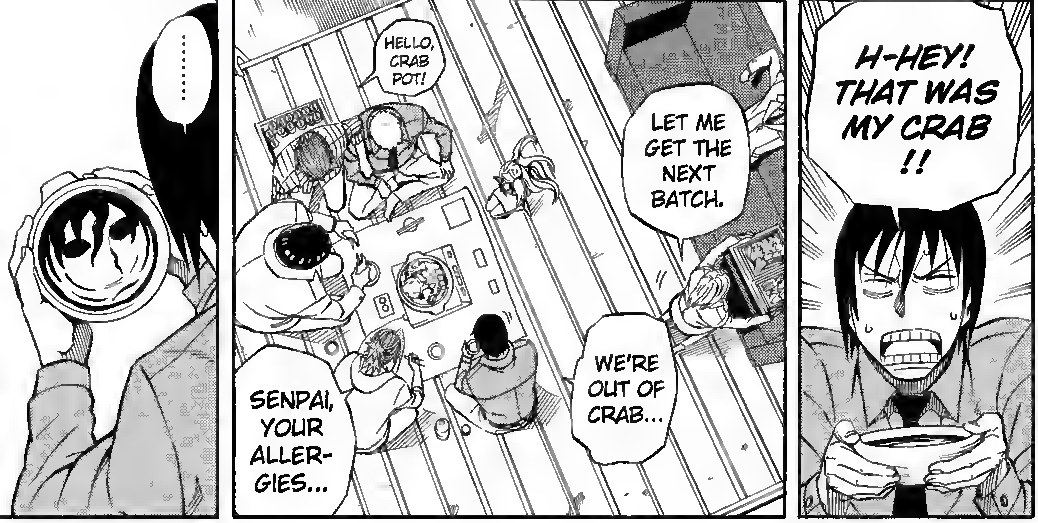
ALSO, JUDGING BY THE FACT THAT ALL THEIR WALLETS WERE NOT TAKEN...
THESE HAVE BEEN HAPPENING WAY TOO FREQUENTLY...

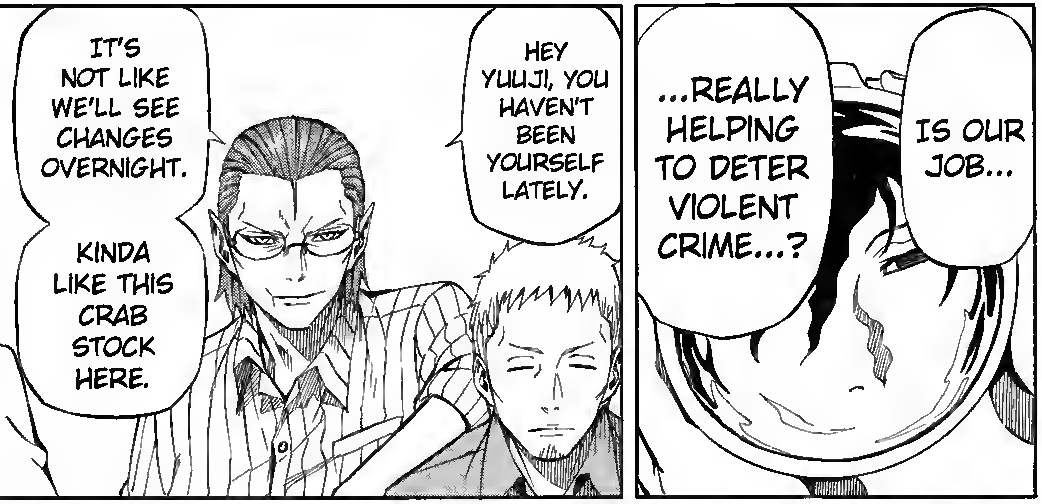

ALL BODIES WERE STABBED IN THE CHEST NEAR THE HEART.
THE POLICE HAVE DETERMINED THESE TO BE HOMICIDES, AND ARE LOOKING INTO POTENTIAL MURDER WEAPONS.

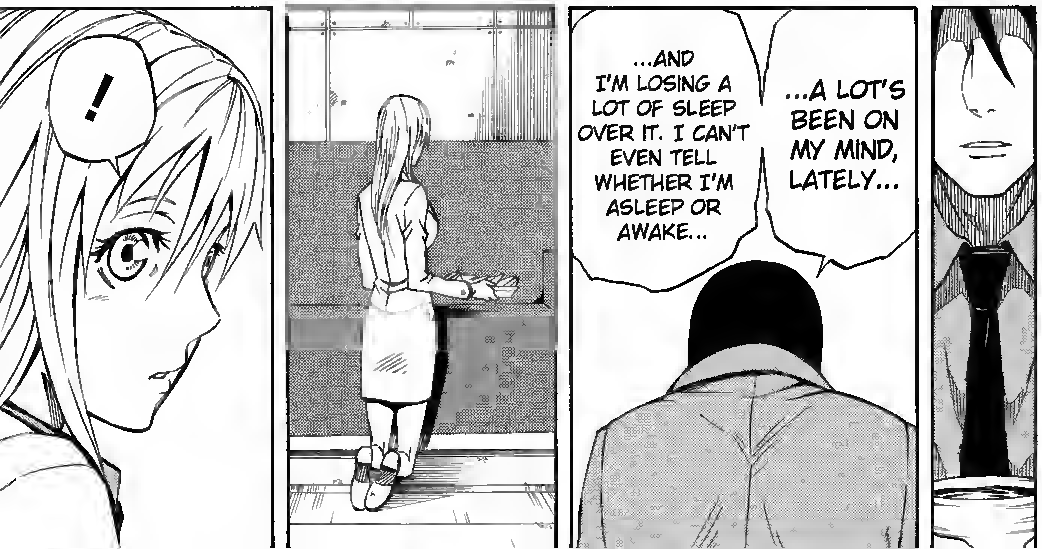
MAYBE THIS SALARYMAN GOT SUCKED INTO AN OLD-MAN HUNTING SPREE?
COULD THE PERP BE THE SAME PERSON?
...OR... MAYBE NOT.
BUT THE EARLIER VICTIMS HAD THEIR WALLETS TAKEN AFTER THEY WERE KILLED.

I HEARD THAT THE OTHER MURDERS AROUND THE NORTHERN DISTRICT HAD THE SAME THING...
STAB WOUNDS IN THE CHEST NEAR THE HEART...?

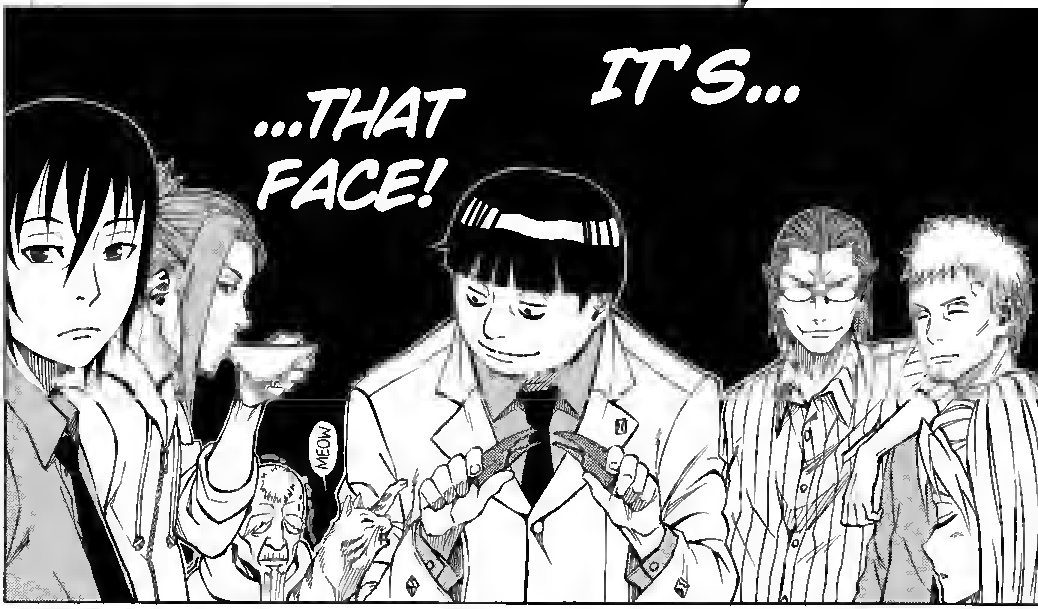
REMEMBER ROBERT PICKTON, WHO THEY SAY HAD MURDERED UP TO 49 WOMEN IN CANADA?
THERE ARE CASES THAT TAKE YEARS BEFORE AUTHORITIES DETERMINE...
...THAT ONE PERSON COMMITTED MULTIPLE KILLINGS.
HOLD ON.
SO THIS GUY'S A PRO AT KILLING?
WE'D BE IN TROUBLE IF HE WAS PUT UP FOR RETALIATION.
SLIP
!
IF THAT'S THE CASE, THEN NO AMATEUR CAN PULL SOMETHING SO ACCURATE OR CONSISTENT...
...LIKE STABBING ALL THREE VICTIMS' WEAK SPOTS DIRECTLY.
THEN THIS ONE'S A SILENT SERIAL KILLER.
AHMM
MMMMM! CRAB AFTER WORK... NOTHING ELSE COMPARES.
And he used a crab claw to do it..!
HAGI-WARA-SAN!!
PLAKK
SCHWIPP

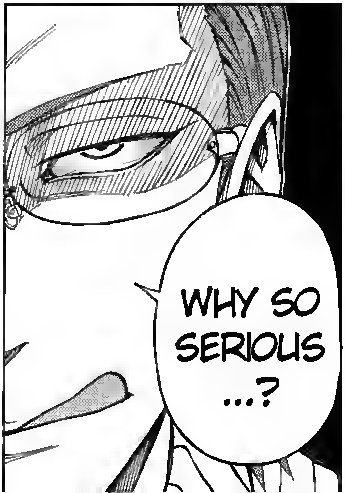

.....
HELLO, CRAB POT!
LET ME GET THE NEXT BATCH.
WE'RE OUT OF CRAB...
SENPAI, YOUR ALLER-GIES...
H-HEY! THAT WAS MY CRAB !!


IT'S NOT LIKE WE'LL SEE CHANGES OVERNIGHT.
KINDA LIKE THIS CRAB STOCK HERE.
HEY YUUJI, YOU HAVEN'T BEEN YOURSELF LATELY.
...REALLY HELPING TO DETER VIOLENT CRIME...?
IS OUR JOB...


!
...AND I'M LOSING A LOT OF SLEEP OVER IT. I CAN'T EVEN TELL WHETHER I'M ASLEEP OR AWAKE..
...A LOT'S BEEN ON MY MIND, LATELY...

SHOCK


IT'S...
...THAT FACE!
MEOW


WHY SO SERIOUS ...?

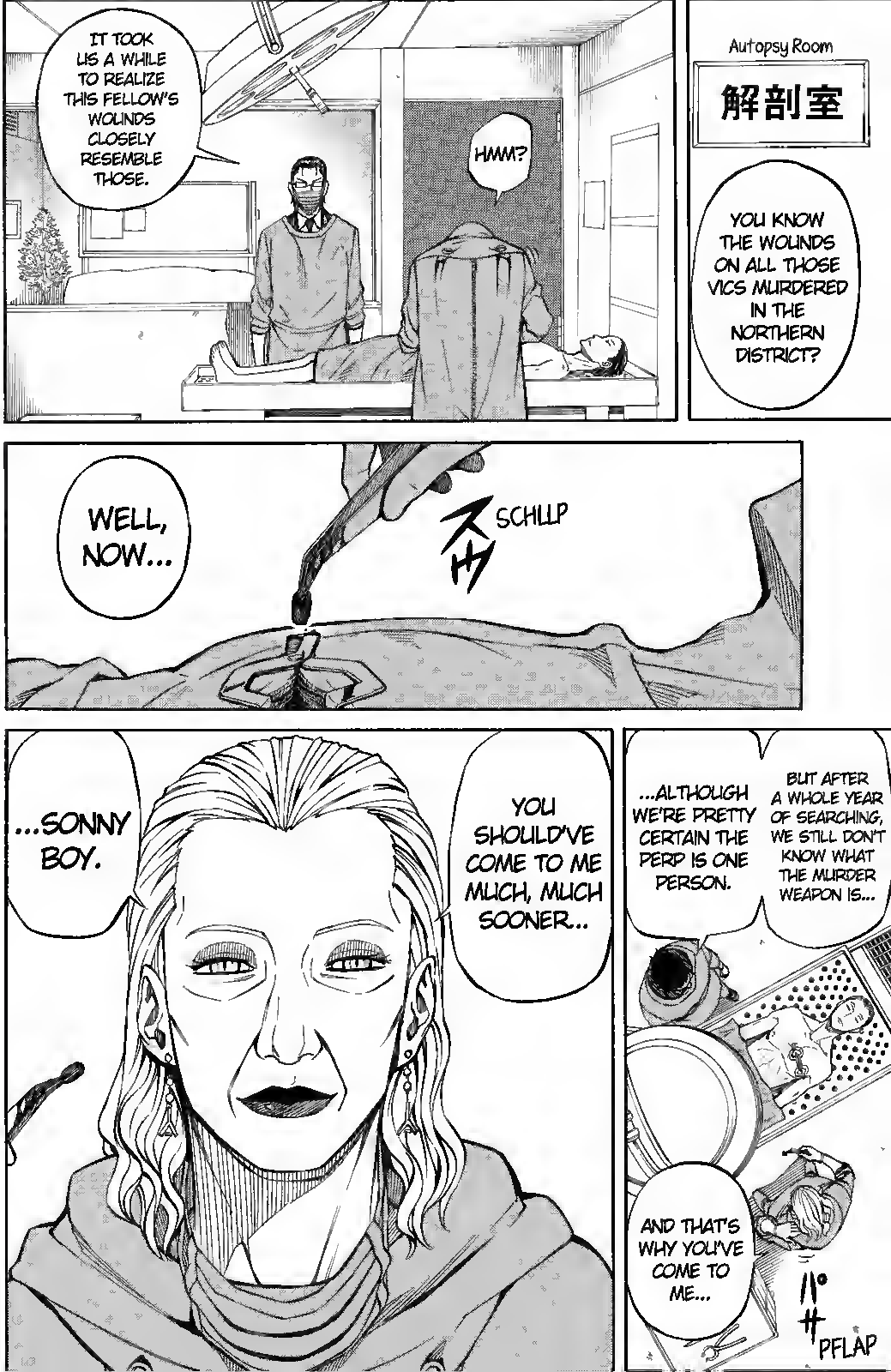
MNN?
WHAT'S UP, RYOKO?

THROBB

WHAT'S GOING ON, RYOKO? WHY DID YOU NEED TO SPEAK TO ME IN PRIVATE?
FLAPP
WHAT'S THIS ALLUVA SUDDEN?! COULD SHE BE...?!
WHAT... WHAT DO I DO?!
WH-WHOA WHOA! HOLD ON A SEC!
I KNOW IT'S WEIRD TO SAY SO, BUT THERE'S SOMETHING URGENT I NEED TO TELL YOU.
LO?!
"LO"?! WHADDYA MEAN?!
AHEM
WHAT... WHAT IS IT? SAY IT.
WELL... I LO--

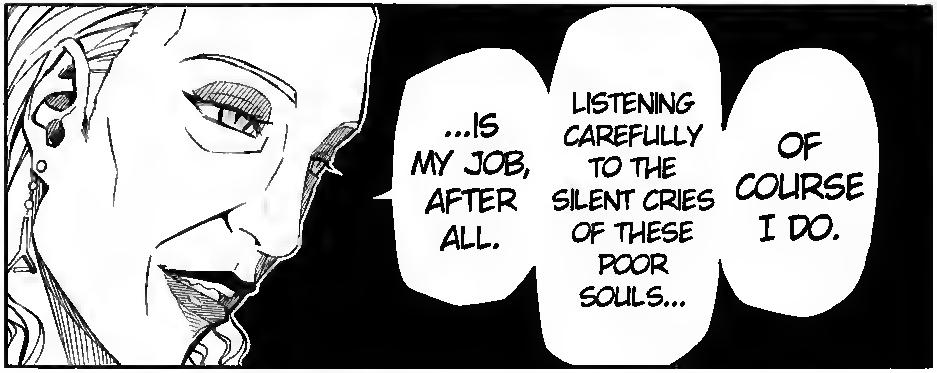
I LOATHE TO CALL IT THIS, BUT WHEN I TRY "SCANNING" OTHERS, I CAN SEE THE DARKNESS IN SOMEONE ELSE'S HEART...
...OR RATHER, THEIR FACE BECOMES BLURRED UP IN A BLACK MESS.
UHH... S-SCAN?
YES.
BECAUSE OF THE AA INCIDENT...
...THAT'S HOW SOME MURDERERS LOOK TO ME FROM TIME TO TIME.
WHY BRING THIS UP OUT OF THE BLUE?
.....
I... SCANNED THE WHOLE GROUP JUST RECENTLY. AND...
...AMONG US...
WHAT ARE YOU SAYING?

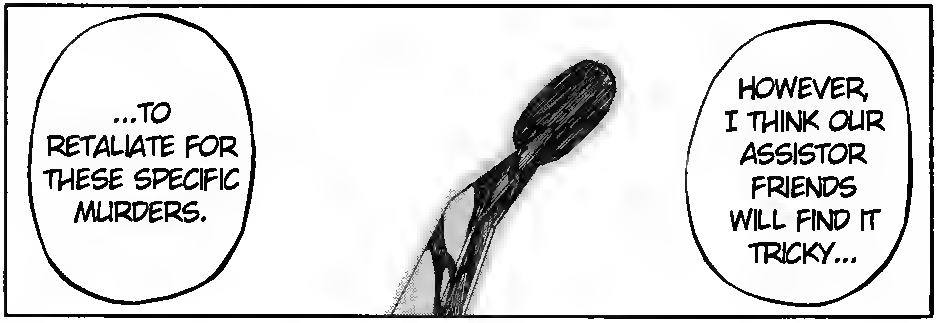
ARE YOU DOUBTING OUR INTEGRITY ...?
AS ASSISTORS?
NO I'M NOT.
I NEVER INTENDED THAT TO...
LET'S GET BACK, THEN.
.....
SCRATCH
SCRATCH
YES, SIR...

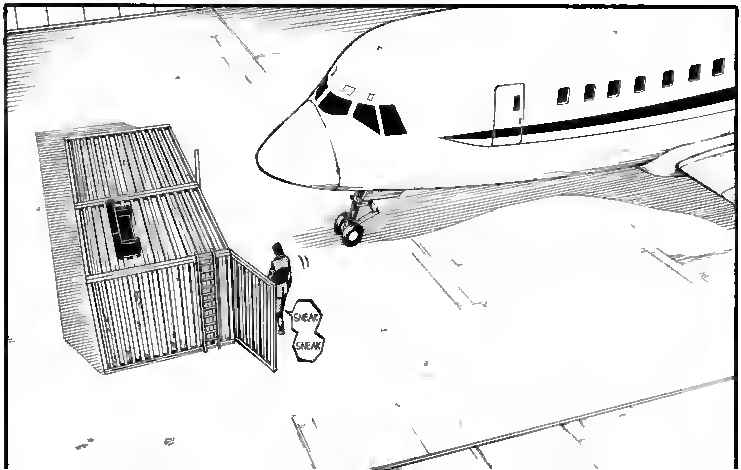

IT TOOK US A WHILE TO REALIZE THIS FELLOW'S WOUNDS CLOSELY RESEMBLE THOSE.
HMM?
Autopsy Room
解剖室
YOU KNOW THE WOUNDS ON ALL THOSE VICS MURDERED IN THE NORTHERN DISTRICT?
WELL, NOW...
SCHLLP
...SONNY BOY.
YOU SHOULD'VE COME TO ME MUCH, MUCH SOONER...
...ALTHOUGH WE'RE PRETTY CERTAIN THE PERP IS ONE PERSON.
BUT AFTER A WHOLE YEAR OF SEARCHING, WE STILL DON'T KNOW WHAT THE MURDER WEAPON IS...
AND THAT'S WHY YOU'VE COME TO ME...
PFLAP

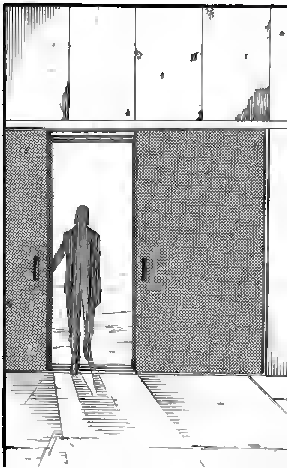
THIS GUY KNOWS THE HUMAN BODY INSIDE AND OUT.
HE KNOWS WHERE ALL THE ORGANS ARE LOCATED...
...AND WHERE ALL THE BONES ARE.
IN FACT, I'D SAY HE KNOWS AS MUCH...
...AS A DOCTOR WOULD.
.....
WITH THIS GENTLEMAN, THE WOUND GOES STRAIGHT TO THE HEART, COMPLETELY MISSING THE RIBS.
THERE ARE FOUR WOUNDS THAT GO DEEP DOWN, BETWEEN THE FOURTH AND FIFTH RIB.
THE OTHER EXAMINERS MUST HAVE WAVED OFF THIS ONE THEORY AS ABSURDITY...
...BUT THE PROOF IS IN THE PUDDING.

...YOU KNOW WHAT THE MURDER WEAPON IS?
MEAN-ING...


...IS MY JOB, AFTER ALL.
LISTENING CAREFULLY TO THE SILENT CRIES OF THESE POOR SOULS...
OF COURSE I DO.


...TO RETALIATE FOR THESE SPECIFIC MURDERS.
HOWEVER, I THINK OUR ASSISTOR FRIENDS WILL FIND IT TRICKY...


SNEAK SNEAK

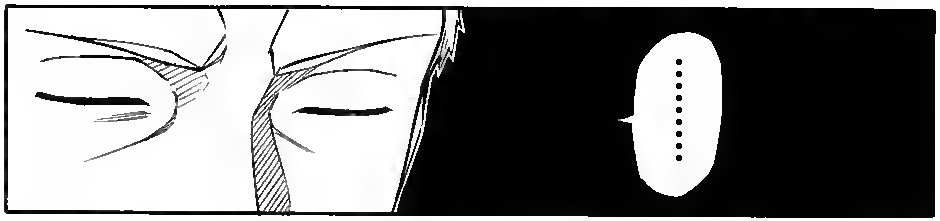


SOME THINGS NEVER CHANGE.
THIS IS WHAT YOU GET FOR EATING CRAB WHEN YOU HAVE SHELLFISH ALLERGIES.
JESUS, YUUJI. IT'S JUST NOT YOUR NERVES THAT MAKE YOU A WORRYWART.
UUGH...
SUPERINTENDENT OKUMURA...
LOOK WHO'S JOINING THE PEASANTRY.
WELL, WELL.
I KNOW THAT LOOK... WHAT DOES HE WANT WITH HAGIWARA-SAN?
...AS YOU ARE A FORMER DOCTOR.
ACTUALLY, HAGIWARA, I'M HERE TO TALK TO YOU...
IF YOU WANT CAPTAIN ODA...

HEY, STOP THAT OR WE'LL NEVER FINISH CLEANING UP.
PHOTOS FROM 2016, EH... TIME SURE DOES FLY.
命
I DON'T REALLY REMEMBER WHO THEY ARE.
THIS JUST REMINDS ME THAT A WHOLE LOTTA PEOPLE LEFT US OVER THE YEARS.
REALLY? I DON'T REMEMBER HIM AT ALL. GUESS YOU GOT A GOOD MEMORY.
WAIT! I REMEMBER THIS GUY! HE'S DONE REAL GOOD BY US, PARTICIPATING IN ALL THOSE PROTESTS AND GATHERING DONATIONS AND STUFF.
THE FEWER HALF-ASSED MEMBERS THERE ARE, THE MORE IT BENEFITS "INOCHI."

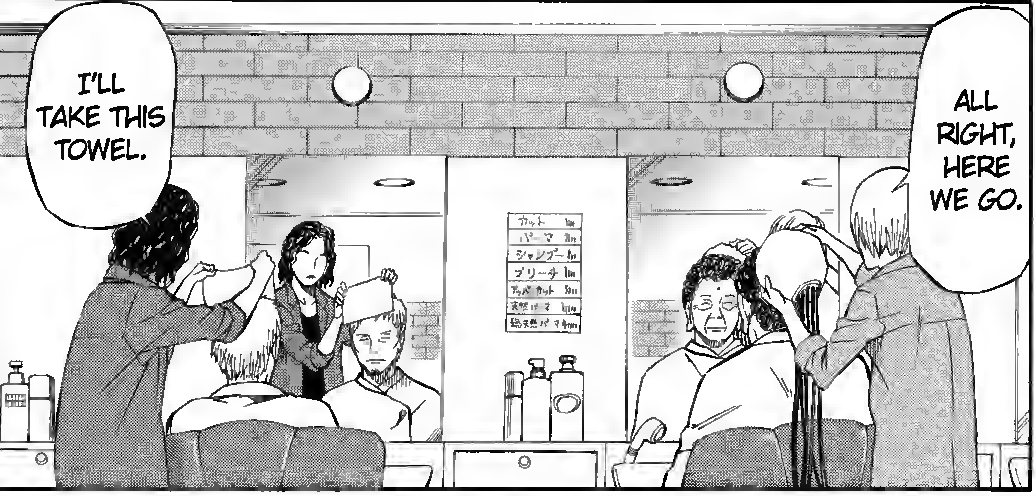
HE JOINED INOCHI AROUND THE SAME TIME AS I DID.
HE'S... UHH... "WHATSIS-FACE"! YEAH, THAT'S IT!
NOW THAT YOU MENTION IT, I DO RECALL ACTUALLY TALKING TO HIM A FEW TIMES...
REMEMBER HOW HE'S ALWAYS DOING THAT THING? IT'S JUST LIKE IN THIS PHOTO!
THAT THING WHERE HE ALWAYS CRANES HIS NECK A CERTAIN WAY.
...SERIOUSLY THOUGH, WHAT'S WHATSIS-FACE'S NAME?
HOLD ON A SECOND.
CAN YOU SHOW ME THAT PICTURE?
LOOKS LIKE CURIOSITY GOT THE BETTER OF YOU TOO, SAKURADA-SAN.
POINT HIM OUT TO ME.
THIS GUY, MAN.

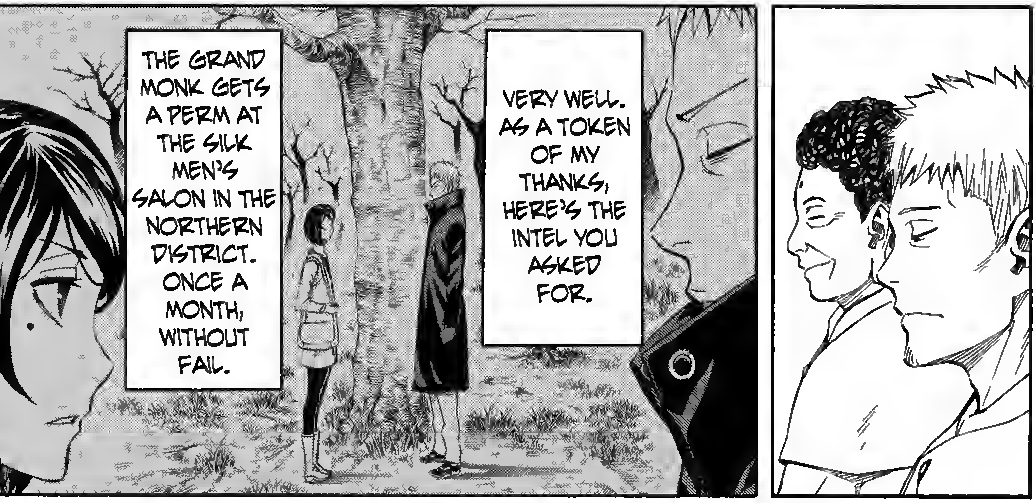
命


……

BRE-E-E-EP
Men's Salon SILK
理容室
Haircuts & Perms
カット・パーマ
HELLO. OH, IT'S YOU...
I'M IN THE MIDDLE OF A PERM.
...FROM ANTI-RETALIATION SENTIMENTS.
I CAN ALSO SEE MOVEMENT AROUND THE BORDER-LINE...
YEAH, I CAN SEE THAT FROM UP HERE.

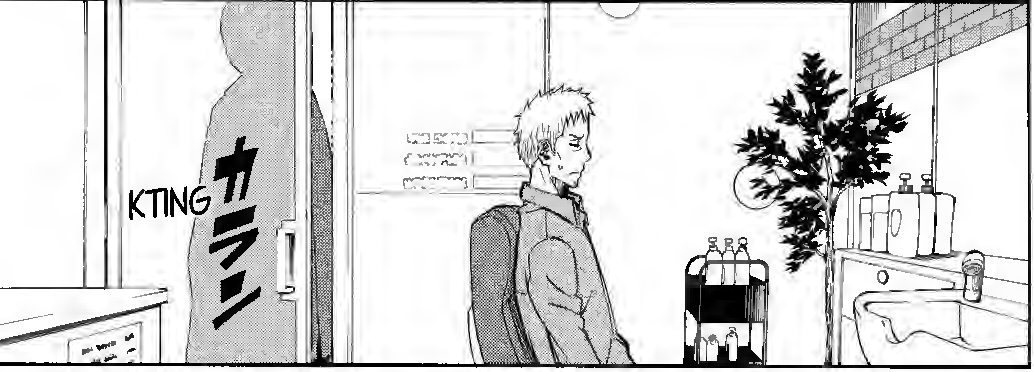
PFLIF
OH, AND ONE MORE THING...
CRICK
DON'T REACH OUT TO ME FROM HERE ON OUT.
FROM NOW ON, I'LL BE APPROACHING ANY INCIDENTS THAT HAPPEN AFTERWARDS...
...FROM WITHIN THE MOVEMENT.
VERY WELL. I'LL RELAY THAT TO HIM AS PRESCRIBED.
AND GIVE IT TO HIM LIKE THIS...
ON BEHALF OF US, PLEASE GIVE MY REGARDS TO THE GUY SITTING NEXT TO YOU.

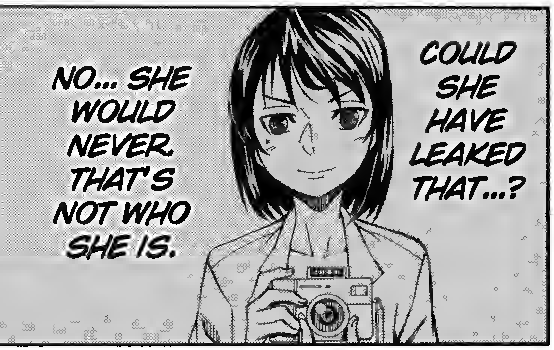

I'LL TAKE THIS TOWEL.
ALL RIGHT, HERE WE GO.

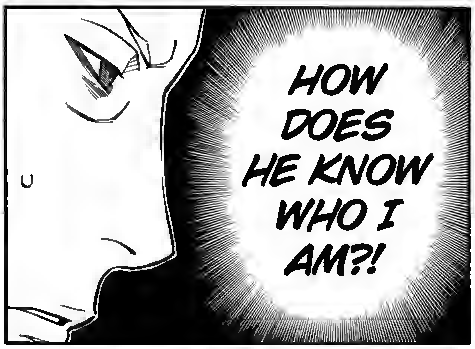

THE GRAND MONK GETS A PERM AT THE SILK MEN'S SALON IN THE NORTHERN DISTRICT. ONCE A MONTH, WITHOUT FAIL.
VERY WELL. AS A TOKEN OF MY THANKS, HERE'S THE INTEL YOU ASKED FOR.

TAK
THANK YOU FOR YOUR PATRONAGE, SIR.
SHFF
P-PP
THANK YOU FOR YOUR PATIENCE, MITOBOTOKE-SAMA. IS THIS TO YOUR LIKING?
IT'S GOOD.

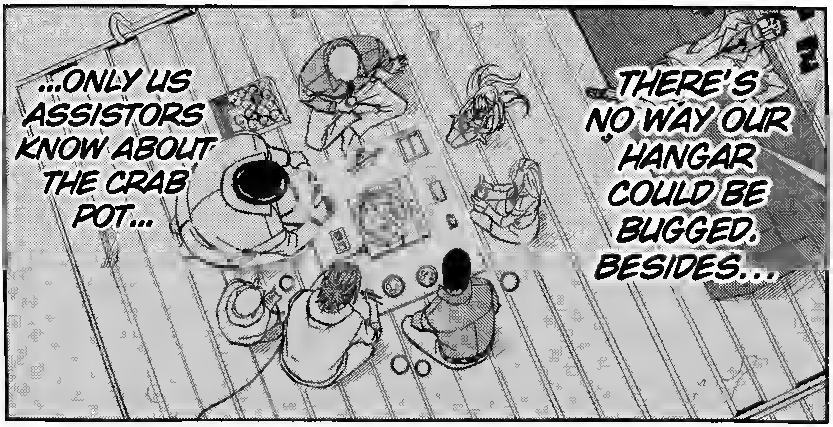
IT'S FINE IF YOU TAIL ME, BUT DON'T OVERDO IT.
FOR CRAB POT, RED KING CRAB WOULD MAKE A BETTER CHOICE THAN SNOW CRAB...
ASSISTOR NO. 2, SAKURADA-KUN.
!!?


KTING カラン

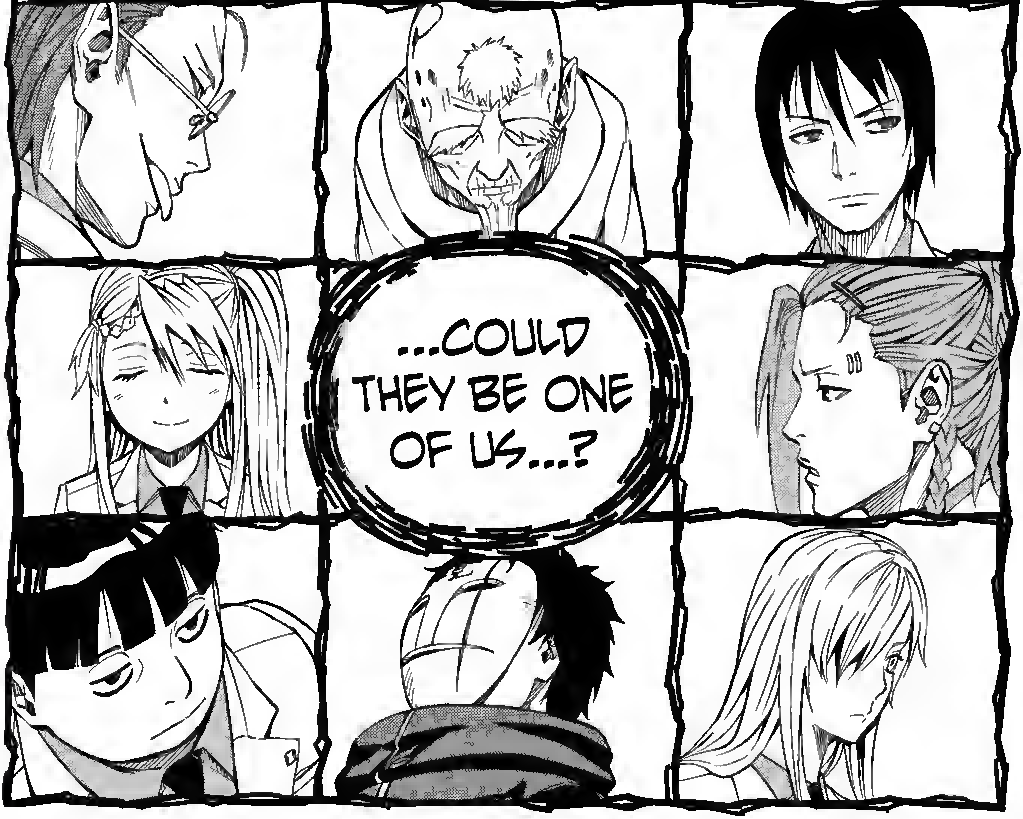

NO... SHE WOULD NEVER. THAT'S NOT WHO SHE IS.
COULD SHE HAVE LEAKED THAT...?


HOW DOES HE KNOW WHO I AM?!

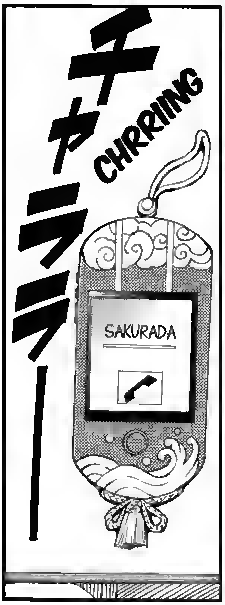
!!

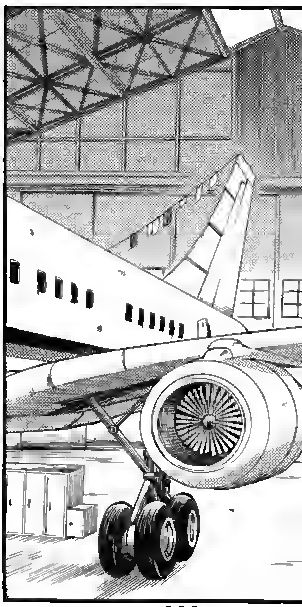

...ONLY US ASSISTORS KNOW ABOUT THE CRAB POT...
THERE'S NO WAY OUR HANGAR COULD BE BUGGED. BESIDES...

THIS PERSON LEAKING INTEL IN ORDER TO CRUSH THE ASSISTORS...
NO... IT CAN'T...

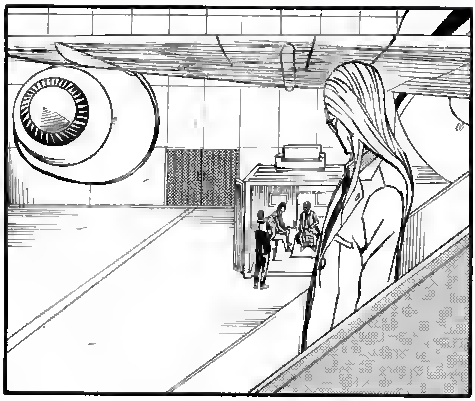

...COULD THEY BE ONE OF US...?

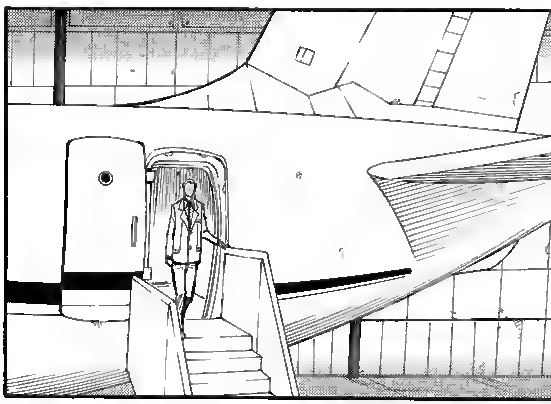
I HAVE SOMETHING TO REPORT CONCERNING THE ANTI-RETALIATION ORGANIZA-TIONS...
WHAT IS IT, SAKURADA?

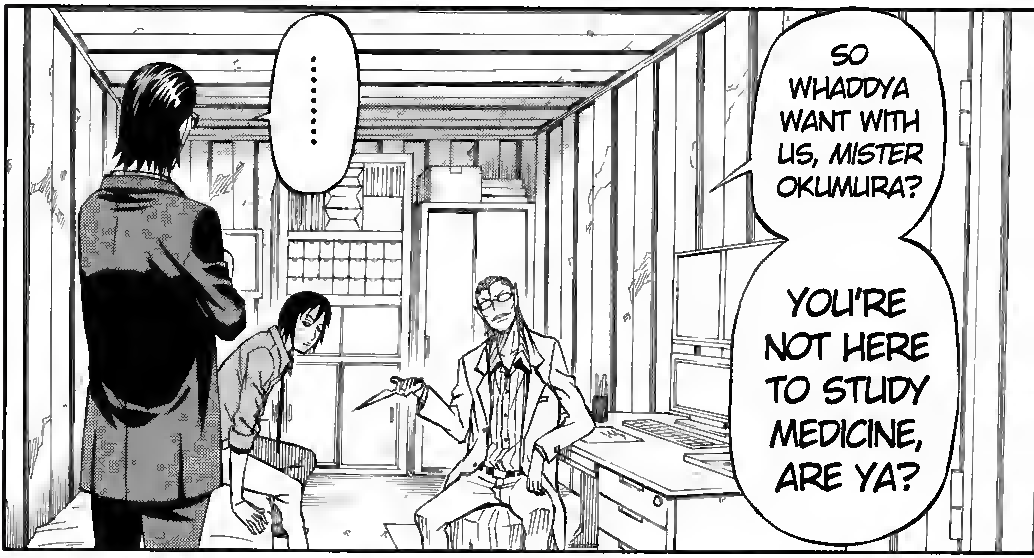

チャラララー
CHIRRING
SAKURADA

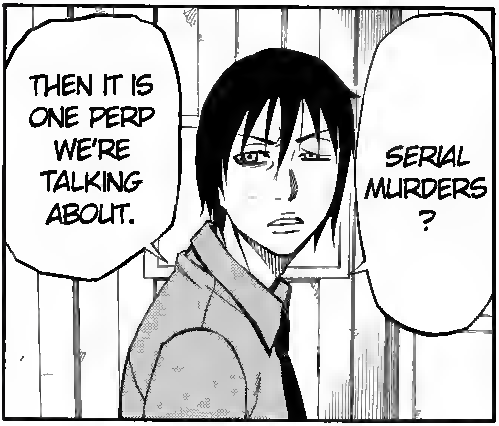


MY MOBILE PHONE MAY CURRENTLY BE WIRETAPPED.
YES, SIR. BUT I WOULD LIKE TO RELAY THIS TO YOU IN PERSON ASAP.
NEW INTEL?
WAIT UNTIL I GET THERE.
UNDERSTOOD. FIND A SAFE HOUSE AND STAND BY. DON'T GO ANYWHERE ELSE.
I SEE...
ROGER THAT.
A SAFE HOUSE ...?



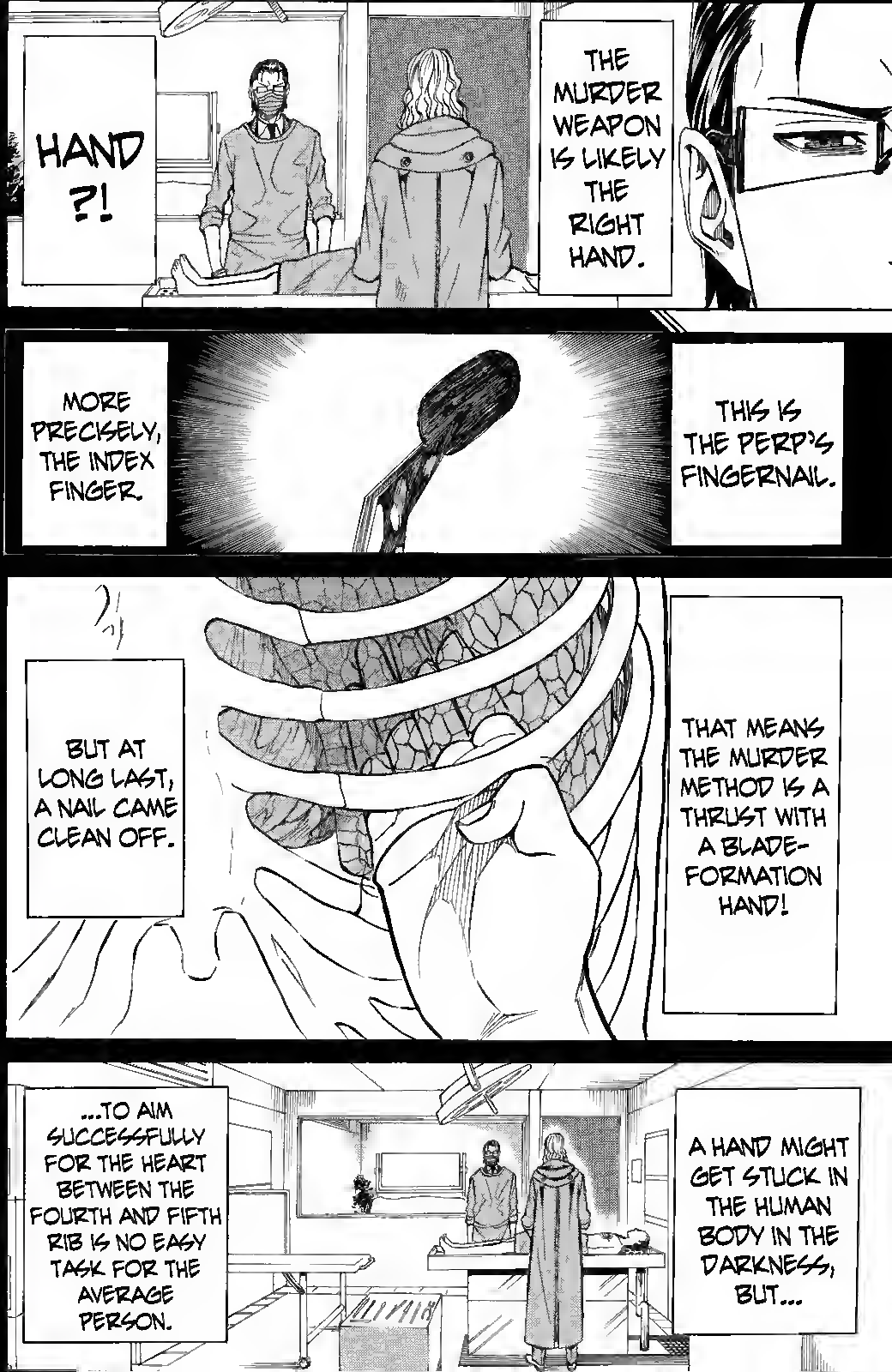



.....
SO WHADDYA WANT WITH US, MISTER OKUMURA?
YOU'RE NOT HERE TO STUDY MEDICINE, ARE YA?

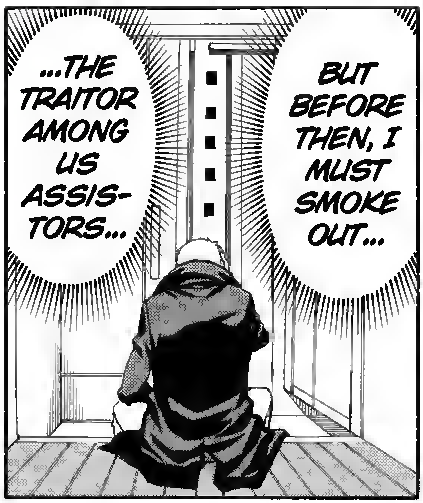

THEN IT IS ONE PERP WE'RE TALKING ABOUT.
SERIAL MURDERS?

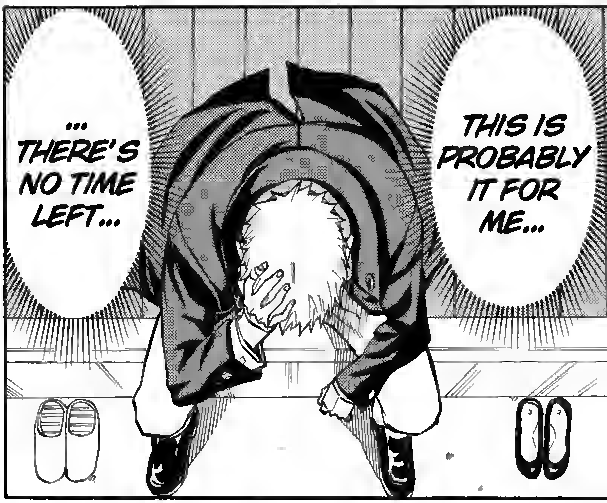
...HAS TO DO WITH THE SERIAL MURDERS IN THE NORTHERN DISTRICT.
THE REASON I'M HERE...

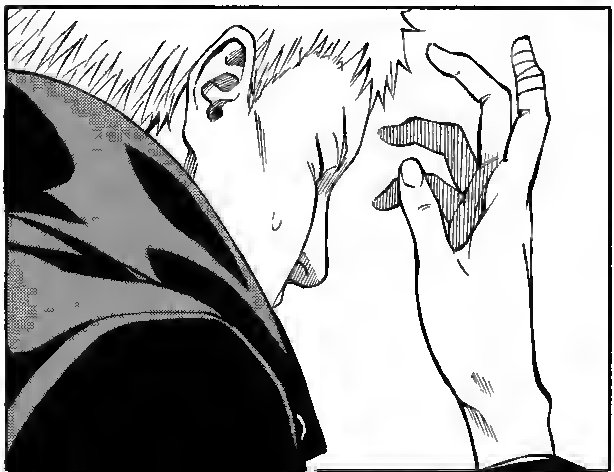
OUR JOB AS COPS IS TO KEEP NARROWING LEADS DOWN ONE BY ONE.
WHY BRING THAT BUSINESS HERE?
ONCE WE NAILED DOWN THE MURDER WEAPON, ONE SUSPECT IN THIS HIDEOUT SPRUNG TO MIND.
THE MURDER METHOD IS TOO PRECISE TO BE DONE BY A NON-SPECIALIST.
THE ONE WHO FALLS INTO THE POCKET IS THE ASSISTOR WITH THE INJURED FINGER.
WE ALREADY HAVE AN ARREST WARRANT.
THE LAST SHOT FOR THE NINE BALL IS IMMINENT.


HAND ?!
THE MURDER WEAPON IS LIKELY THE RIGHT HAND.
MORE PRECISELY, THE INDEX FINGER.
THIS IS THE PERP'S FINGERNAIL.
BUT AT LONG LAST, A NAIL CAME CLEAN OFF.
THAT MEANS THE MURDER METHOD IS A THRUST WITH A BLADE-FORMATION HAND!
...TO AIM SUCCESSFULLY FOR THE HEART BETWEEN THE FOURTH AND FIFTH RIB IS NO EASY TASK FOR THE AVERAGE PERSON.
A HAND MIGHT GET STUCK IN THE HUMAN BODY IN THE DARKNESS, BUT...

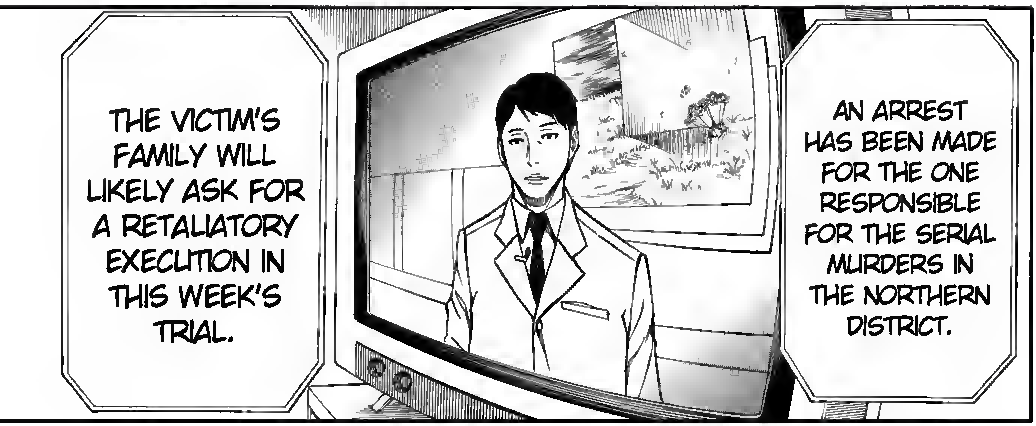
...BUT HE USES THE SAME METHOD ON EACH AND EVERY VIC, TO NEAR-PERFECT CONSISTENCY.
WHAT SURPRISES ME IS, NOT ONLY DOES OUR GUY USE SUCH A CONVOLUTED METHOD TO MURDER OUR VICS...
IT'S AS IF HE'S TRYING TO TELL US...
...TO FIND HIM.
I MUST TELL HIM!

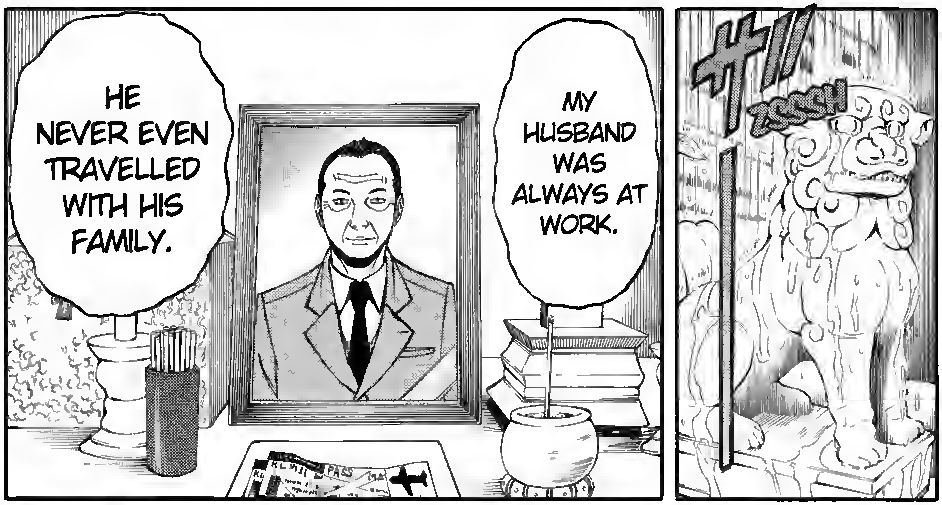

...THE TRAITOR AMONG US ASSIS-TORS...
BUT BEFORE THEN, I MUST SMOKE OUT...


... THERE'S NO TIME LEFT...
THIS IS PROBABLY IT FOR ME...



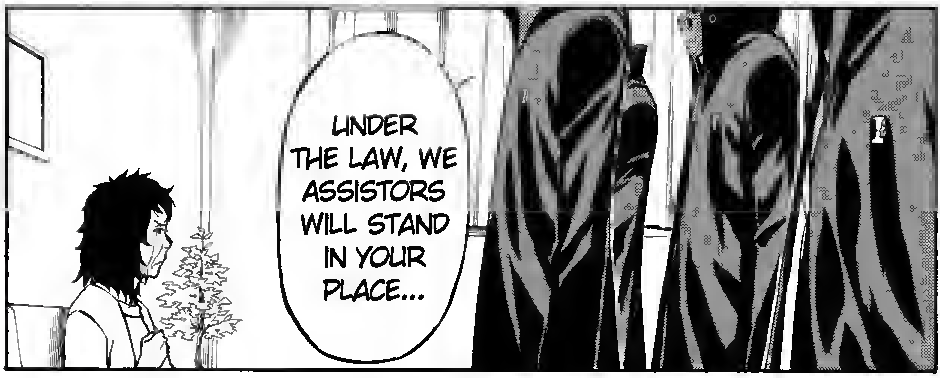
WELCOME HOME, DARLING.


THE VICTIM'S FAMILY WILL LIKELY ASK FOR A RETALIATORY EXECUTION IN THIS WEEK'S TRIAL.
AN ARREST HAS BEEN MADE FOR THE ONE RESPONSIBLE FOR THE SERIAL MURDERS IN THE NORTHERN DISTRICT.


HE NEVER EVEN TRAVELLED WITH HIS FAMILY.
MY HUSBAND WAS ALWAYS AT WORK.
PASS
ZASSH

HE DIED HOLDING ON TO HIS PLANE TICKET...!
SNIFF.. HHGH..!
MY HUSBAND WAS MURDERED ON HIS DAY OF RETIREMENT!

...MEET HIS DEMISE LIKE MY HUSBAND DID...
THAT MURDER-ER... MUST...

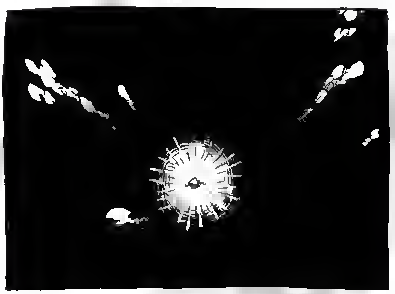

UNDER THE LAW, WE ASSISTORS WILL STAND IN YOUR PLACE...

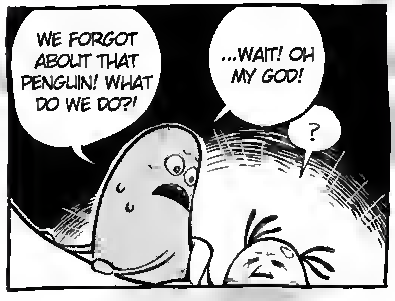
...TO CARRY OUT YOUR REVENGE.

MONTHS LATER, AT THE ARENA OF EXECUTION
WHY ARE WE HERE LIKE THIS...?!
WHY...

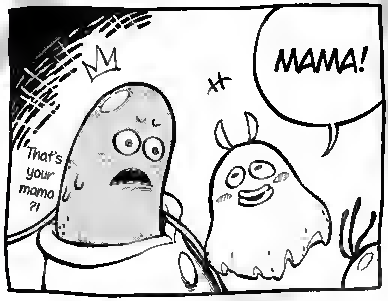
ANSWER ME...
...SAKU-RADA-SAN!!

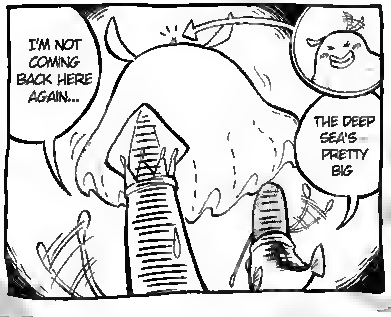
THE HALO





THE SCALE OF THE DEEP SEA





English Digital Edition
Chapter 019

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助太刀09
Seishi Kishimoto

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